

SPORT



Thailand's Sadom Kaewkanjana, who only completed qualifying school last December, was over the moon with his debut win in an Asian Tour event -- the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open -- at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday. Among the local contestants, it was Jamal Hossain Mollah (bottom) who carded the best scores for the second time in a row.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Kiron re-elected to FIFA, AFC posts

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) women's wing chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiron was re-elected as a FIFA Council member and an executive member of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) when the 29th congress of the continental football governing body was held in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Kiron, who was first elected to these two positions in 2017, beat her only South Zone opponent Mariyam Mohamed of Maldives by 31 to 15 votes to secure the AFC Female Executive Member position. She retained her FIFA Council member position by dint of securing a simple majority vote.

"I want to thank all my football family members from AFC and FIFA who has gifted me this day and fought for me through my tough times. My heartfelt thanks to Honorable AFC President Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa for supporting and caring for me like an elder brother. I also thank my mentor - BFF and SAFF president Kazi Salahuddin who has literally moulded a Mahfuza Akter Kiron. I want to dedicate this day to a great lady -- the Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina -- a true inspiration of woman empowerment and role model," Kiron was quoted as saying in an official statement from BFF.

The election also saw Asia's football chief and FIFA's second-in-command Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim al Khalifa receive a fresh, four-year term as he was elected unopposed.



Title goes to Thailand again as locals fall flat

ATIQUÉ ANAM



There is an oft-repeated quote in football by former England international Gary Lineker, which goes: "Football is a simple game. Twenty-two men chase a ball for 90 minutes and at the end, the Germans always win."

Golf may be a sport far different in terms of nature and excitement from the beautiful game, but when it comes to Bangladesh hosting an annual Asian Tour event, this famous quote somehow draws parallels: The Asian tour in Bangladesh is a simple game. Around 150 men including a large number from Bangladeshis play it for four days and at the end, some young Thai golfer runs away with the crown.

That is what happened at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday, with rookie Thai golfer Sadom Kaewkanjana winning the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open in his debut Asian Tour event. The 20-year-old, who held the lead since the second round, survived a nail-biting finish to clinch the 350,000-dollar event by a single stroke, thereby becoming the third golfer from Thailand to win the prestigious event in its five-year history.

Sadom was understandably elated with making his winning debut on golf's third-most important tour after having come through the qualifying school last December.



JAMAL HOSSAIN MOLLAH

"Winning in my first start on the Asian Tour, I feel very happy. I will take a lot of positives from this week and this win will give me a lot of confidence in my game as well. It's been an unbelievable journey since turning professional last December," Sadom told Asiantour.com.

"I didn't expect to do so well. I finished second here in an amateur event four years ago. It's good to come back and get that win now as a professional. I will remember all the good memories here," said the youngster, who pocketed a paycheck of 63,000 dollars.

While Sadom was celebrating his breakthrough victory, it was time for introspection for the Bangladeshi golfers, many of whom had started the

SELECTED SCORES AND PRIZE MONEY

1	Sadom Kaewkanjana (Thailand)	-19 (265)	\$63,000
2	Ajeetesh Sandhu (India)	-18 (266)	\$38,500
3	Rashid Khan (India)	-17 (267)	\$22,050
4	Maverick Antcliff (Australia)	-12 (272)	\$17,500
5	Wei-lun Wang (Taipei)	-11 (273)	\$11,993
5	Jazz Janewattanond (Thailand)	-11 (273)	\$11,993
10	Jamal Hossain Mollah (Bangladesh)	-9 (275)	\$6,396
12	Siddikur Rahman (Bangladesh)	-8 (276)	\$5,349
15	Sajib Ali (Bangladesh)	-7 (277)	\$4,435
15	Akbar Hossain (Bangladesh)	-7 (277)	\$4,435

event promisingly but failed to maintain consistency over the four days.

Bangladesh's best golfer, Siddikur Rahman, finished tied 12th after a disappointing 74 on the final day for an aggregate of eight-under-par (276). The two-time Asian Tour winner, who had carded only one bogey over the first three rounds, returned a card of six bogeys against three birdies in the final round. He was frustrated with his own performance and bemoaned some wayward drives and putting.

"It was disappointing for me really. I would call it bad luck after having played so well in the first three rounds. I hit three shots into the trees, which was very wayward for me," Siddikur told reporters after

the day's play.

The 34-year-old admitted that he was under no pressure for the title as the gap with the leader was too much to start with; rather he pointed to some broader malaise of the game in Bangladesh for the overall poor results of the golfers.

"If I am asked, I would say we do not get the desired training, fitness-wise and mental counselling too, which golfers from other countries enjoy. This is what makes the difference at the end of the day," the veteran golfer opined.

"I spent twice the amount of my earnings for golf last year, without even having a sponsor. And this is unthinkable for the other golfers of our country," Siddikur added.

The best performer among the locals, though, was Jamal Hossain Mollah, who finished tied 10th with an aggregate of nine-under-par (275). The 34-year-old golfer had a flawless last round with six birdies to finish as the best local golfer in this event for the second year running.

"I played for the title. I had two good days and two bad days. If I didn't make mistakes on the other two days, I might have been close to the top," Jamal said, while echoing Siddikur's sentiments that local golfers need better training, especially psychological training to cope with the pressure of performing for four days against the best golfers from the region.

Sajib Ali and Akbar Hossain finished in joint-15th position with matching scores of seven-under-par (277).



Let's forget countries like England, Australia, India and England. If you go to Sri Lanka's Colombo, there are eight stadiums. Among them you can play Tests at three venues. In Dhaka there are no cricket grounds that fit the criteria apart from the one in Mirpur... so we need more venues.

NAZMUL HASSAN
BCB PRESIDENT

'I prefer chatting nonsense with my teammates'

ICC



England all-rounder Ben Stokes has expressed how he has "changed the way he does things" in the aftermath of an incident in Bristol, insisting that he wants to be remembered for his exploits on the cricket field.

Stokes, speaking to The Daily Mirror, commented on lifestyle alterations he has made since he was cleared of affray charges by a Bristol Crown Court in August last year, following a late-night brawl in September 2017, and was forced to miss numerous crucial England series through suspension.

"I was that close to my career ending and being thrown away just like that," he said. "That might be the thing that has changed the way I do things."

Although Stokes maintains that he still enjoys celebrating with his team-mates, he also said that compromises have had to be made, and he has adapted to the nature of being a 'target' in the public eye. "I still go out, but if you mean going 'out out', I don't go 'out out' any more," he said. "I used to love going out and celebrating with the lads, but we can do that in the hotel and I don't miss it."

"There are people ready to target you everywhere you go. I prefer sitting in and chatting absolute nonsense with my teammates."

The expectation and role-model status of being a global sporting star is something Stokes has acknowledged. "You're an international sportsman and people see you do that, I totally understand it and it is hugely regrettable."

In the lead up to the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in May, the 27-year old said that he was keen to improve his reputation by helping England win the tournament on home soil. He has 79 ODI caps to his name, having made his debut in the format back in 2011. "I don't want to be remembered as the guy who had a fight in the street," he said. "I want to do things on the field to be remembered for."

"If we win the World Cup, that becomes the first paragraph."

No ground is big enough for me: Russell

PTI, Bengaluru

No ground is big enough for me, Andre Russell said after yet another unbelievable display of power hitting by the Jamaican in the IPL.

Russell smashed an unbeaten 48 off 13 balls as Kolkata Knight Riders plundered 66 runs in four overs to script a memorable win over RCB here Friday night.

The all-rounder said that he had thought Australian grounds were massive, only to surprise himself by sending a few into the stands Down Under.

"A few grounds in Australia and then I surprised myself there by hitting a few into the stands. No ground is big enough for me I guess, I just trust my strength and trust my power. I have good bat speed. I trust that as well," Russell said after his exploits in KKR's 5-wicket win.

Needing 66 runs off 24 balls, KKR were up against it before Russell came in and smashed them to complete the job with five balls to spare.

"The support is good from the boys and I am in a good space so that I can express myself. I try short arm jabs as extending the arms can put you in trouble. Can't explain much, rather show that on the field," Russell said.



Bangladesh batsman Mahmudullah Riyad (L) started batting in the BCB Academy nets yesterday for the first time since sustaining a shoulder injury during the tour of New Zealand. Meanwhile, one of the younger Tigers, Mehedi Hasan Miraz (R), took the opportunity to show his wife Rabeya Akter Priti his place of business.

PHOTO: EKUSH TAPADER

'My focus is to play my best cricket'

ICC



There has been plenty of talk surrounding Jason Roy potentially opening for England at the Ashes later this year, but the 28-year-old's first priority, he said, is the ICC World Cup 2019.

England's worries at the top of the order in Tests is a long-standing problem, and following the retirement of Alastair Cook last year, the issue is even more pressing. Rory Burns and Keaton Jennings, the incumbents in the role, haven't always convinced, and that has generated plenty of talk that Roy, who is impeccable in limited-overs

cricket, might prove up to the task against the red ball.

Roy insisted his main focus is on the World Cup, but believes impressive performances at the premier event might have the bonus effect of getting him an Ashes spot. "My main focus is on the World Cup, looking to play the best cricket possible and hopefully win it," Roy told The Independent.

"That is the best way to push my case, if I score the volume of runs that I want to score then I'll get myself noticed [on the Ashes radar]."

Roy has left no stone unturned in preparation for the World Cup. He's learnt his lessons from the past, when after excursions at the Indian



JASON ROY

Premier League, he was burnt out for the Champions Trophy 2017.

This time, he has opted not to participate in the IPL 2019. Instead,

he is spending time getting used to fatherhood. "This is my first kid so it is more important than any cricket. That was my choice," he said. "I also didn't want a repeat of 2017 when I burnt myself out before the Champions Trophy."

"I went to the IPL [in 2017] which was an awesome opportunity for me but I spent a lot of time on the bench and training, maybe overtraining, and I was definitely burnt out."

"That affected my form heading into the Champions Trophy, and with a child on the way and the World Cup coming I couldn't risk that this year."

England's World Cup campaign begins on 30 May against South Africa at The Oval.